

The Social Risk Analysis

The Social Risk Analysis facilitates the interplay of team members with the aim of achieving increased efficiency in the work process, by forestalling social conflicts in the group and by accelerating the establishment of social roles in the group. The Social Risk Analysis has turned out to be applicable in a number of different contexts, e.g. in industrial management groups and organizations, but also in project teams or other small groups temporarily assigned to a specific task. Irrespective of the type, scope, size and location of the project or other type of assignment carried out by a team of people, a social process with a minimum of destructive conflicts is of the greatest importance to the work performance and the achievement of the appointed goals.

The Social Risk Analysis – Step by step

The content and the approach to the Social Risk Analysis depend on how the group is composed and on the characteristics and context of the assignment that is to be carried out. Thus, there is no universal and predefined configuration of the content of the Social Risk Analysis and nor is there a distinct working procedure for the group. However, the Social Risk Analysis should be initiated at the very early stage of the work process in order to support the work process in a most efficient way. One conceivable approach to the Social Risk Analysis is described in the following four steps.

The first step in the Social Risk Analysis is constituted by a self-reflection (self-examination), which of course is carried out individually by each member of the team. The individual self-reflection, which accounts for the individual personality, values and qualities, etc., is presented to the group. The scope and context of the current assignment make up the starting point for the self-reflection, i.e. the self-reflection should be adjusted to the specific group and the specific assignment which is to be carried out. It is not the purpose of the self-reflection to be fully complete, turning your innermost thought and feelings inside out and present the outcome to everyone in the group.

In step two, when all group members has accounted for the own self-reflection, the group should jointly try to identify potential areas of conflicts between the members of the group. This step is about identifying potential problems or situations in which conflicts between group members may occur.

In step 3, the identified risk areas from step 2 are analysed and suitable preventive measures and policies for how the group should act in order to delimit the risk for conflicts to occur, and to the consequences of conflicts that do occur, are outlined.

It is important that the whole working process and the decisions, from the introductory self-reflection to the concluding analysis, is well-documented and made available for the members of the group. The documentation preserves the agreements of the group and works as a kind of a social contract, which can be referred to in case of a disagreement.

The Social Risk Analysis – a continuous process

Initially, the Social Risk Analysis is likely not to be totally correct or fully complete due to lack of self-knowledge or insufficient communication at the an early stage of the work process. This is part of the social process and that is why the Social Process should be considered a continuous process that runs through out project or the work assignment. Thus, the group should plan for recurrent updates and reviews of the

original Social Risk Analysis. The follow-up includes a brief review of the Social Risk Analysis and consideration of possible conflicts in the group. Besides that, the review sessions also provide a good opportunity for mutual feedback between the members of the group, which supports an increased self-awareness of the members. Note that the review sessions should focus totally on the matters related to the social process and therefore discussions about factual work related matters should be avoided. Further, the review sessions provides a possibility for the group to temporarily take a step out of the work process, giving the group a chance to review the work process in perspective. Remember to continuously document the topics and discussions during the review sessions. The documentation provides an excellent reference to the final evaluation of the group performance and it provides a good starting point for possible, future, assignments of the group.

Topics of the Self-reflection

The self-reflection constitutes a good way to gain increased self-awareness among the group members and it provides a basis for the Social Risk Analysis. A self-reflection includes the so called meta-cognition, i.e. to think about your own way of thinking. During the meta-cognition you analyse what you were thinking, and how you were acting, in situations of specific relevance to the current assignment in order to realize for yourself the basic thoughts and reasons for your actions. Sometimes your thoughts and actions are controlled by deeply rooted and implicit values. With meta-cognition, it is possible to elucidate and to explain to oneself how your values control your opinion and your actions.

The Social Risk Analysis does not require a total mental revision that reveals your innermost thoughts and values to your group members. However, it is of greatest importance that everyone is honest and holds on to the truth. If that is not the case, it is likely that the Social Risk Analysis can cause even more difficult conflicts in the group.

When doing a self-reflection for the benefit of the professional working assignment, the starting point of the self-reflection should always be the individual relation to the assignment. Thus, the topics of the self-reflection should in one way or another, be of relevance to the group and to the assignment that the group is to solve. Consequently, there is not a predefined set of general topics for the self-reflection. However, a few examples of potential general topics for the self-reflection are presented below:

- How do I prioritize my loyalties? What is most important to me, e.g. my family and friends, my professional carer, money, appreciations, duty, etc.
- Under which circumstances do I work and perform the best? When I work against the clock, with great responsibilities, on my own, as the underdog, early in the morning, after lunch, at night etc.
- Which kind of personality do I prefer to cooperate with? Why?
- What kind of behaviour do I appreciate from my team members? Why?
- Which type of personality do I find it difficult to cooperate with? Why?
- What kind of behaviour do I dislike among my team members? Why?
- ...
- ...

By recurrently considering these and other topics of social interaction during the work process, the self-reflection becomes an easily conducted part of the work and you become aware of and understand your own thoughts, values, decisions and actions.